

Spirit of the Salmon

This stretch of the Klamath River has been home to Yurok people for thousands of years. For generations, Yuroks have clearly understood the connection between a healthy, abundant salmon population and their own well-being. Strictly enforced fishing codes insured that people upstream received their fair share of fish and that optimal numbers of salmon reached their spawning beds.

Today, Yuroks sustain a vibrant community here, one that is still strongly linked to the salmon’s annual migration upstream. Those living along the river continue to share cultural values and ceremonies that center on sustainable fish harvesting practices. Salmon fishing is at the heart of the struggle to preserve tribal identity, tradition, and independence.



Thirty miles upstream, hundreds of men once participated in the ritual of building the fish dam, leaving sufficient openings in the weir to allow fish upstream to spawn.



Elaborate laws, rituals and ceremonies, such as the salmon bake pictured above, have been respected for centuries, and continue today.



Yuroks use gill nets to catch steelhead trout and salmon.